Round Table Topic Descriptions
SLCP Project Director Meeting
August 14-15, 2008

Session 3
4:25 – 5:00 PM

Ready, Set, Stay in School: Implementing an   **Potomac Ballroom Salon A**
Effective Advisory Program
Starr Herrman, Project Director, Metro Nashville Public Schools, Tennessee

Advisories are the nation's #1 dropout prevention tool with proper implementation. The "relationships" piece of Rigor, Relevance and Relationships needs to be a priority. Learn the "real story" for making your students, faculty, and entire campus rank advisory as a non-negotiable part of a student's school experience. Join us as we share our successes and our lessons learned in this journey in Metro Nashville Public Schools.

Our implementation plan covers:
- Administrative Support/Faculty Buy In
- Organization and Structure in Ninth Grade Advisories and in Advisories 9-12
- Professional Development
- Continuous Improvement

Discussions Questions:
1. How can I get administrators to understand and want to make this commitment?
2. What supports are needed by the project director to develop the organization and structure?
3. What type of professional development is necessary?
4. How do you assess effective implementation?
5. How do you assess student outcomes?

Integrating AVID into SLCs: Program Coordination   **Potomac Ballroom Salon A**
And Teacher Supports
Pamela Hatton, SLC Project Director, Pinellas County, Florida

The four schools in our SLC cohort are dedicated to bringing a rigorous curriculum into their classes and creating a college going culture on their campuses. Since 2005, three schools accepted the challenge of implementing a new program that for many was out of their comfort zone: AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination). This program takes academically capable students, enrolls them in honors and AP courses and supports them in reaching their full academic potential. The challenge that these three schools faced was trying to understand the role of AVID within an SLC school. It is not a stand alone community as many thought. AVID provides elective classes for a targeted group of students. However, the strategies that are infused in the elective classes are also strategies that are successful with all students. As the SLC Project Director it is my role to support AVID implementation within these schools and their communities. Factors that are important for communities to understand:
- AVID isn't its own community but rather all teachers within the community employ AVID strategies within their classrooms

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- The AVID District Director works collaboratively with the SLC Project Director to support the implementation
- AVID needs to be considered the hub which connects SLCs school wide
- Training is an essential piece for both teachers and the Project Director
- The use of federal dollars to support AVID aligns with the goals and objectives of the SLC grant (materials, professional development, tutors, field trips)

Discussion Questions
1. How can the Project Director stimulate conversations with principals about increasing higher order thinking in all classes across SLCs?
2. If you do not have a AVID District Director but have schools that want to begin implementing AVID at their school what next steps should you do upon returning home?
3. How can the Project Director be well informed of the specific training needs of the teachers at the identified schools? (school based, regional, national)
4. What data is available from the AVID District Director?
5. If my district does not have AVID, where do I go to get additional information?

Dual Credit: Program-Building and Partnership   **Potomac Ballroom Salon A**
Development Strategies
Mary Meier, SLC Program Director, Waterloo Community School District, Waterloo, Iowa

Two of the objectives of our grant are to provide rigor and a smooth transition from high school to "career and life"." Our high schools have begun the emphasis on a career focus for all students. We have been able to establish a number of dual credit courses with area post-secondary institutions, and wish to further develop the offerings and increase the non-majority enrollment in the classes.
- Quarterly planning meetings with area post-secondary institutions and high schools
- Piloting courses at a single high school before full implementation.
- Professional development for staff regarding dual enrollment
- Multiple ways to focus students on a career focus
- Students identified and recruited to participate in rigorous courses
- Many communication methods to reach staff, students, and parents
- Beginning information about dual enrollment at the middle level
- Use of technology
- Parent initiatives to emphasize role of dual enrollment
- Financial assistance
- Support systems for dual enrolled students

Discussion Questions:
1. What was the process to begin offering dual credit classes?
2. What are the current offerings and how will the program expand?
3. How is communication maintained between teachers and institutions?
4. What were some of the challenges to overcome?
5. What training will be necessary to help teachers increase their knowledge of dual credit classes?
6. How are English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and underrepresented students counseled into and supported to be successful in highly rigorous dual credit coursework?
7. How will data be utilized to measure the success of the dual credit enrollment?

Supporting a Culture of Continuous Improvement by **Potomac Ballroom Salon B**
Creating Systems of Accountability
Ed Streich, SLC Program Director, Independence School District, Missouri
Kristel Barr, Principal, Truman High School, Independence, Missouri
Bill Brooks, High School Redesign Coordinator, Independence, Missouri

Improving education through SLC structures coupled with solid, research-based initiatives represents major shifts in thinking for any staff. Undergoing such change requires a staff to embrace a culture of continuous improvement. Truman High School works to build a culture of continuous improvement and performs multiple check-ups on initiatives by using various systems of accountability. These systems do not represent a top-down approach; rather, it distributes accountability to everyone involved in school improvement.

Our systems of accountability include:
- Protocols
- Focus Groups
- Technical Assistance Visits (TAVs)
- Surveys
- Sharing and Presenting Learning Experiences - Successes and Challenges
- Teacher Learning Walks
- Administrator Walk-Throughs
- Advisory Board
- Building Leadership Capacity

Discussion Questions:
1. What essential elements must be in place before establishing systems of accountability?
2. What are suggested first steps for moving into systems of accountability?
3. How are all stakeholders involved in systems of accountability?
4. How do we build leadership capacity throughout the school? Why is this important?
5. What are the logistics surrounding focus groups, surveys, and teacher learning walks?

Preparation, Access and Relationships: **Potomac Ballroom Salon B**
Keys to Increasing Positive AP Outcomes for All
Roni L. Jolley, Staff Liaison/AP Project Monitor, Maryland State Department of Education, Baltimore, Maryland

As concerns mount about the academic preparation and performance of America's children, school leaders across the state of Maryland are working together to build comprehensive programs to increase rigor, raise student achievement, and promote a college-going culture for all students. Providing greater access to Advanced Placement courses and exams, and building the infrastructure that prepares students for college success are at the core of these efforts. Several systemic initiatives are being implemented to increase AP participation/performance and college readiness, including use of PSAT/NMSQT data to inform instruction and strengthen student skills, implementation of Pre-AP/AP student support programs, college/university partnerships as well as intense ongoing professional development for administrators, teachers and school counselors.

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Discussion Questions
1. When expanding or building AP programs, what are some of the challenges or barriers that districts/ schools face?
2. How can expanding access and equity to AP improve the quality of teaching and learning, build relationships and influence the academic experiences of <u>all students</u>, not just those who take AP?
3. What strategies have been implemented to ensure student success in AP courses and exams, i.e., professional development, student/parent outreach, academic support services, etc.?
4. How and what data are used to identify students for AP, inform curriculum and instruction and strengthen student skills for college success?
5. AP classes should reflect the diversity of the school. How are 1st generation students, students from low income families, English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and under-represented students counseled into and supported to be successful in AP courses and exams?

Developing A Data Driven SLC: The Inquiry Team Strategy   **Potomac Ballroom Salon C**
Charlene Jordan, Ed.D - Senior Executive Director for School Redesign, New York City Department of Education

In New York City, SLC schools are required to have an Inquiry Team in each SLC. An Inquiry Team provides an opportunity to develop school-based expertise in using data and information to improve student outcomes. Teams select a target group of struggling students within each SLC, analyze achievement data, and engage in action research and the development of specific academic interventions. The goal is to train staff to use in-depth inquiry to identify academic strengths and challenges of struggling students, resulting in interventions / programs designed to improve overall student achievement. Some challenges include training and support for over 115 SLCs in 19 schools and finding time for teams to meet during the school day.

The goal is to have a proficient Inquiry Team in every SLC that drives knowledge that can be shared school-wide and results in measurable improvements in student performance.

The work of an Inquiry Team:
• Work with SLC/school stake-holders to prioritize an SLC-wide focus – a sub-population of the SLC whose proficiency in a chosen content area falls within a particular range
• Identify a target population that shares a skill deficiency or need, using formative and summative assessments, and classroom work.
• Develop and implement differentiated, targeted instructional practices in response to research and analysis of data
• Share ongoing research, analysis and suggestions for instructional changes with whole school community in order to improve outcomes for all students
• Continuously monitor target populations, ensuring consistent implementation of revised instructional practices for all students
• Receive training and support in the use of all DOE accountability tools

Discussion Questions:
1. How can these practices translate in other school systems?
2. Who should be on an Inquiry Team?
3. How do you share practices beyond the 6-member team to impact whole school reform?
4. How do SLCs use student work and other data to diagnose needs and make instructional decisions?
5. What other types of action research might staff engage in around data?

Sponsored by:
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High School Programs Group

Implementing Pre-Advanced Placement Professional   **Potomac Ballroom Salon C**
Development and Program Strategies
Jeanne Paynter, Ed.D., Maryland State Department of Education, Baltimore, Maryland

Key tenets of high school reform include having high expectations for all students regardless of their past academic performance, removing barriers to student participation in college preparatory courses, and motivating more students to take and succeed in rigorous course work. One approach to achieving these goals is the integration of "Pre-AP" instructional strategies in grades 6 - 10. The College Board defines Pre-AP as "a suite of professional development resources" designed to equip middle and high school teachers with the strategies and tools to engage students in active, high-level learning. Our Advanced Placement Incentive Program grant, *Project NEXUS*, incorporated Pre-AP professional development and curriculum alignment strategies to increase academic rigor without causing the onset of *rigor mortis*.

Discussion Questions:
1. What instructional approaches are effective in promoting academic rigor while stimulating student engagement in learning?
2. In what ways can barriers to student participation and success in college preparatory coursework be identified and overcome?
3. What is the role of teacher vertical teams in aligning curriculum and instruction with college-level (AP) standards?
4. How can professional development be designed, implemented, and evaluated to support the implementation of Pre-AP strategies in the classroom?

Ninth Grade Transition   **Potomac Ballroom Salon D**
Shana Hawkins, SLC Program Director, Mountain View High School, Joint School District No. 2, Meridian, Idaho

The Freshman Academy focuses on a teamed approach where students have choice and voice in their studies. Each team is connected to an upper academy and focuses on issues and topics that provide real world examples. Teamed teachers utilize cross-curricular units to ensure rigor and relevance.

The Freshman Academy supports incoming students with the following strategies:
- 8th grade orientation- 8th graders visit our school in the spring
- 1st day- only Freshmen for 2 hours the day before the school year begins. They receive their schedules, have a tour, meet teachers, and learn about the culture of the school.
- Academy Leadership- a 9-10 only class. Students have the opportunity to learn about leadership, teamwork, and student council processes without having to be a member of student council.
- Freshman Recognition- a celebration for the completion of their freshman year.
- Freshman Cornerstone- a course to help students analyze who they are and how they learn so they may apply these skills to their classes and career choices, while focusing on community and post high school options.
- Teamed teachers- core teachers in English, Science, and Cornerstone classes share a 90% pure team of students.
- Weekly collaboration- same subject teachers collaborate weekly to develop common assessments and analyze data in regard to course work and studies.

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Discussion Questions:

1. How do high schools determine the needs of their incoming freshmen, then work to address those needs?
2. How do high schools set up transitions that meet the needs of incoming Freshmen?
3. What training is required of school personnel and teachers to ensure an easier transition into high school for freshmen and new students?
4. How are English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and under-represented students counseled into courses, then supported to be successful in highly rigorous coursework?
5. How is data created then utilized to continuously improve students' experience, academics, retention rates, and overall enjoyment of school?

Early Intervention: Before TOO SOON becomes TOO LATE   **Potomac Ballroom Salon D**

Tom Covington, SLC Coordinator, Bassett High School, La Puente, California

Early Intervention starts three weeks into the school year at Bassett High School. Students who are behind at week three fall farther behind every week and for many of them, intervention at the end of the quarter is too late. BHS focuses on a 3 pronged attack to battle failing grades. This system cut first semester multiple F students from 183 to 92 in one year (50% cut).

Freshman, specifically, are supported in the following ways:

- AVID
- SLC Collaboration (three to four times a month)
- Advisory Tutoring time
- Pyramid of Intervention

Discussion Questions:

1. How soon is too soon for intervention?
2. What early intervention strategies are in place(that work)?
3. Are English Language Learners and Special Education students such as students in the Resource Specialist Program or Special Day Classes included in early intervention plans?
4. How is data used to support intervention?

Using SLCs to Connect Academic and Career   **Potomac Ballroom Salon D**
Instruction for Student Success

Dr. Wanda Gilliard, SLC Program Director, DeKalb County Schools, Decatur, Georgia
Tisa Parker, SLC Coordinator, DeKalb County Schools, Decatur, Georgia

The mission of the career academy program in the DeKalb County School System is to provide students with a sense of belonging and the opportunity to explore their interests and aptitudes while receiving a solid foundation in academics. Additionally, we provide students with the academics and career-focused electives to graduate with a concentration in humanities, math/science, or career technology in order to show the connection between academic courses and careers in the real world.

Main Focus
- Academic Teaming
- Teacher Advisement
- Student Internships
- Advisory Councils
- Senior Projects

Challenges
- Scheduling
- Staffing
- Integration
- Corporate Partnerships
- Leadership turnover

Discussion Questions:
1. What career academies are you currently implementing?
2. How did you establish buy-in from your teachers?
3. What type of training/staff development did you provide your teachers to help them to increase collaboration across the curriculum?
4. What strategies are used to motivate students to take more rigorous courses?
5. How does your career academies aid in your schools meeting Annual Yearly Progress?

AP: Increasing Rigor & Changing Culture   **Francis Scott Key Salon A**

Jacqueline Rivera- Fromkin, SLC Program Director/ Vice Principal, Passaic School District, Passaic, New Jersey

Goals and Challenges of our Grant:

Our school, with the help of the Advanced Placement Incentive grant, has had a chance to improve our instruction by increasing academic rigor and expectations across the curriculum. We have been able to promote a post-secondary education culture in the home and in the school. We have formed partnerships with Southern Regional Education Board/ High Schools that Work, the College Board/ Princeton Review, and the Academy for Educational Development. Our staff members are also redesigning curriculum, developing formative assessments, determining common grading policies and have attended professional development workshops on vertical articulation with weekly coaching visits.

Our Strategies: Our incoming freshmen are supported with targeted strategies that include:
- Daily tutoring in Math and English courses as well as after school for AP courses
- Collaboration and transition activities with the parents and community partnership
- History and Robotics Enrichment academies with increased access to instructional technology
- College Awareness Saturday and After school programs with visits to universities

Discussion Questions
1. What strategies can change the instructional culture of a school so that teachers take on the challenging work of increasing the number of courses that will challenge students?
2. When a high school is committed to making significant changes in course rigor, what concrete steps help the staff move in that direction & evaluate its progress?
3. What professional development is required to help teachers gain the skills they will need to increase the rigor in their classrooms?
4. How are English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and under-represented students counseled into and supported to be successful in highly rigorous coursework?

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Service Learning Communities and Creative Scheduling   **Francis Scott Key Salon B**
Dan Kovalak, SLC Coordinator, Maple Heights City Schools, Maple Heights, Ohio

Maple Heights constructed three SLCs which offer similar experiences for students in grades 10-12 without making any one SLC less academically rigorous than another. We base our SLCs around the idea of service learning. Each SLC has a service learning focus to differentiate itself the others.

SLC scheduling has its own interesting challenges many of which will force a school to make some important choices. Being creative and using resources in an effective way is crucial in developing a proper SLC schedule. I will discuss our experiences with various schedules including block, modified block, modes, and straight seven. Our experiences brought us to institute a unique schedule that will include two 80 day semesters and one 20 day semester used for service learning, credit recovery, and learning enhancement. Making use of time is one of the most important factors in having a successful SLC.

Our Freshman Academy will pilot the new schedule this school year with the rest of the school coming on board next year.

Discussion Questions:
1. What process do high schools use to develop & evaluate their schedule for the school? How might these processes hinder or encourage school staff buy-in?
2. What training will be necessary to help teachers understand the changes they need to make in the classroom?
3. What are key factors when considering scheduling that supports SLC planning?
4. How do schools use feedback and data to guide additional schedule improvements that will inform the whole school as they move to a new schedule?

AVID Strategies school-wide to increase rigor   **Georgetown Salon A**
and entry to Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate
Cherrie Smith, Student Advancement Coordinator, Highline School District, Seattle, Washington

The mission of Highline Public Schools is *educate every student and expect excellence.* Everything we do is focused on the ultimate goal of seeing each and every student graduate ready for college, career, and citizenship. To accomplish this goal, we strive to move students forward in rigorous classes, not hold them back in remedial classes. One of the ways to accomplish this goal is by using AVID strategies school-wide, and specific AVID elective classes with tutorial support to enable students to succeed in Pre-AP, AP and IB classes. This requires staff collaboration, vision, and professional development.

SLCs prepare students for AP/IB classes early…
- Cooperation and collaboration with middle schools
- Students placed in Pre-AP LA with AVID elective support
- Teachers are trained in AVID strategies school-wide
- Tutors trained and many times home-grown
- AVID Elective-trained teachers in many content areas
- ELL and AVID Elective classes

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Discussion Questions:

1. How do SLCs work with feeder schools to prepare for rigorous classes?
2. How does a school staff decide what strategies should go school-wide?
3. How can a school or district grow a tutorial system to work beyond AVID?
4. What training do teachers need to step up 9th and 10th grade classes to prepare students for higher level classes in 11th and 12th grades?
5. Discuss how your district or school moves ELL students into rigorous classes.

Building District Capacity During Leadership Changes   **Georgetown Salon C**

Joyce C. Mitchell, Academic Director of High School Initiatives, Smaller Learning Communities Project Director, Memphis City Schools, Memphis, Tennessee

Building district capacity during leadership changes is critical to continuous success of SLCs. Districts play a significant role in the development and institutionalization of Smaller Learning Communities. SLCs are not add-ons to the existing school organization; they are the pulse and the artery of reform.

District policies are needed to:
- support SLCs
- strengthen building-level self-governance
- support professional development needed to build capacity
- provide flexibility in allocating resources to meet needs

Memphis City Schools district staff support and collaborate with site schools in the redesign and development of SLCs through its Academic Leadership Team, Cross-Functional Teams. The district has marshaled both human and fiscal resources to support the establishment of smaller learning communities.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the structures, processes, resources needed to provide capacity beyond leadership changes?
2. How can you engage your school communities and stakeholders in sustaining and building continuous support for SLCs?
3. What infrastructures are needed to create sustained relationships between the district office and the school?
4. How do you leverage partnerships with internal and external stakeholders to support restructuring schools through smaller learning communities?